HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

AGRI • NUMBER 103 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Wednesday, June 20, 2018

Chair

Mr. Pat Finnigan

Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

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● (1600)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.)): Welcome, everyone.

[*English*]

Pursuant to the order of reference of Wednesday, May 30, 2018, the committee commences consideration of Bill C-281, an act to establish a national local food day.

We have the sponsor of the bill here, Mr. Wayne Stetski.

Welcome, Mr. Stetski.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Thank you.

The Chair: We shall give you the floor for your opening statement.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Thank you very much.

I really appreciate your setting aside time today to do this on the last day of the session.

I'll keep my remarks very brief so that we can focus mostly on questions. I do believe you have a copy of my handout.

Simply put, food matters. It's at the heart of our culture, our economy, and our communities. A national local food day would provide an opportunity for all of us to recognize the hard work of the many producers, harvesters, manufacturers, restauranteurs, and others who put food on the table for Canadian families every single day. It would also give us an opportunity to reflect upon and raise awareness of the challenges many Canadians face in finding healthy, affordable food close to home and to take action to foster local food systems that work for everyone.

In working on this bill, I have had the great privilege of meeting with many producers, organizations, and individuals dedicated to local food. I've heard about well-loved Canadian products such as melons from Miner Heritage Farm in Shefford, maple rye ale from Cassel Brewery, and Strom's Farm pumpkins in Guelph. I continue to hear from Canadians across the country about just how important local food is to their families and to their communities. It would be a sad world without Laval's famous organic tomatoes or the locally caught fish from Richmond, B.C., or Arc en Ciel Farm's magnificent apples.

I understand the committee has received letters of support from a number of national and other stakeholder groups, and the clerk has distributed them. In addition, we have received letters of support, and we will be circulating these, from Food Secure Canada, the Canadian Meat Council, Restaurants Canada, and Turkey Farmers of Canada. They have submitted letters to us that we'll be happy to send on to the committee.

As I've said often, Bill C-281 is an easy bill to love, and I certainly hope that's true for the members sitting around this table. I'd also like to speak briefly about Food Day Canada, an event originally organized in 2003 as the world's longest barbecue. It is a private enterprise that coordinates dinners at about 31 restaurants nationally but has no provincial or federal recognition and no direct relationships with producers, farmer's markets, or other agricultural organizations across Canada—at least none that we have heard from. I believe there's lots of room to promote Canadian food in conjunction with Food Day Canada.

Whether it's Miramichi gold honey, Mégantic maple syrup, Rabbit River eggs, Haltwhistle cheese, Red Deer beef, or White Owl whisky, we all have food in our communities to be proud of and to celebrate.

I'm hopeful that, with your support, we can celebrate national local food day this fall.

I thank you again for having me here today and look forward to answering your questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you so much, Mr. Stetski.

Without being biased, being an organic food producer myself and belonging to a co-operative, the real local food co-operative that I was also a founding member of, I would certainly support that day in October when we could celebrate local food.

I'm sorry if I'm kind of biased, but that's where I stand.

Are there any comments or questions?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Longfield, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Thank you.

You're right. It is hard not to love a local food initiative.

I've talked with Anita Stewart at Food Day Canada as well. Guelph and Wellington have a local food initiative called Taste Real, which has a tourism initiative attached to it. In terms of the bill, the one thing I'd like to see is coordinating with other local food initiatives across Canada, so that we're not duplicating and maybe we're enhancing the local food initiatives. I'm not sure it needs to be in the bill, but I think it would be in the spirit of what you're doing to try to build on what is already out there in the network in Canada.

I'm really interested in the Taste Real group. They're quite active in Guelph. I was a member of their organizing and planning committees back when they first got going, as well. I'm sure there are other local food initiatives in Canada that could benefit from this, and we need to make sure we're not isolating ourselves as a federal government by stepping in and doing something that other people are doing really well.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Yes, absolutely. There have been many different food initiatives going on across Canada. I think what makes this bill important is that it gives everybody—every riding, every member of Parliament, and every senator—the opportunity to celebrate the local food in their communities, and indeed, to celebrate Food Day Canada.

Again, I don't know whether that needs to be in the bill or not, because there are many initiatives that we've seen from across the country. We'd like to celebrate all of them, and we encourage members to celebrate local food initiatives and food initiatives in every riding across the country.

● (1605)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stetski.

Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Stetski. thank you very much for introducing this bill. It was not at all hard to get the Conservative caucus to support it. All my colleagues were really delighted with the idea of celebrating local food.

In each of our regions, those close to the producers, those who see them working day after day, sometimes get the impression that city-dwellers do not realize the importance of buying products from places located as close as possible to where they live. This is a wonderful initiative.

If members in the House move quickly and reach an agreement to pass the bill, the first National Local Food Day would be next October 5. Until very recently, I was thinking that October would be one of the most beautiful months in 2018 because of that, but we have just learned that marijuana will become legal on October 17. That reduces my desire to see the month of October come along.

However, I really wanted to tell you that you have done good work, You consulted a number of groups. Many people have written to us in support of this initiative. In my constituency, I have received many very positive comments after the various speeches in the House on Bill C-281.

I jokingly said that there are a lots of turkey producers in your constituency and they were going to be very happy that National Local Food Day is being celebrated in Thanksgiving week, but that the turkeys would be a little less happy. This is a fine initiative.

I really have no questions to ask. I just wanted to tell you that we support the bill. I commend your desire and your will to make this happen, to establish this day recognizing local producers.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

Mr. Stetski, do you want to respond to that?

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Thank you.

It was really interesting, during the speeches that were given in the House in support of Bill C-281, to hear the range of food being produced in all of the different ridings from the individuals who chose to speak. It really made me want to do a cross-Canada tour, so I could come to all of your ridings and celebrate the great local food that you have.

We particularly picked the Friday before Thanksgiving so that we could celebrate local food on the Friday, and then eat it on Sunday. I think that's partly why the Turkey Farmers of Canada have also jumped on board. It's a good fit for them.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stetski and Monsieur Berthold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Drouin, do you have any comments?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr Chair.

I too thank you very much for introducing this bill, Mr. Stetski.

I also have the good fortune to live in a constituency where there are turkey producers. So it is possible for me to celebrate, several days in advance, with everything found on a plate at a typical Thanksgiving dinner. However, I know that in other regions of Canada, that is not possible. With this bill, I hope that we will be able to highlight the importance of local food and the importance of growing food locally, even in the places where that is more difficult. I am thinking specifically of Canada's north.

I want to congratulate you and would appreciate you staying with us longer, though the House is going to adjourn its work today.

Thank you very much for this fine initiative, Mr. Stetski.

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Thank you.

I know it's been, from our perspective, just wonderful to see the growth in things like farmers' markets in my riding and across the country. I'll use Cranbrook as a quick example. Ten years ago there was no farmers' market and now over $1 million goes through that farmers' market every summer, and that's true for pretty much everywhere there is a farmers' market across Canada.

The interest in food security is growing as well, and it is important to keep food security in mind. The best way to have food security is to grow your food locally.

● (1610)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stetski.

Mr. MacGregor.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

I don't know if I can be so formal with a caucus colleague, so Wayne, I'll just say congratulations on getting to this stage. I think you picked a perfect day when people are putting together their shopping lists and thinking more about what's grown locally, which they will then put on their tables for Thanksgiving. You have tremendous support across the board from all the heavy hitters in the agricultural community, and I'm prepared to move on and to vote on the clauses of this bill.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

Mr. Peschisolido.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Chair, thank you.

Mr. Stetski, I too would like to say congratulations. This is good because it shows that we can do many types of agriculture. Local food is important, but it's not just for farmers' markets. It's not just for the "foodsters". You can have a regional food system with surpluses and have a pretty good economic power in exporting food, so Wayne, I'd like to commend you.

As I mentioned, we're going to be having an event at Kwantlen Polytechnic by someone I always refer to in this committee, Kent Mullinix, who is in charge of the agriculture department. I'd love to have you there. We'll be talking about regional food systems.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to end by saying, Wayne, great work. I look forward to clause-by-clause.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Thank you.

If I may, I've certainly heard from my constituents and from people across Canada about how great it is to see Parliament come together, all supporting an initiative that's good for Canada. It is a very positive way to finish the session. Everyone has been very supportive, and I thank you so much for that.

In the end, I think all of our constituents will benefit from having a national local food day.

The Chair: Mr. Dreeshen.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Thank you very much.

I too congratulate you, Wayne. As someone who has actually had a private member's bill go through the process, I know how significant it is. I know you must be proud, and the folks who have worked with you as well.

First of all, you had me at Red Deer beef. I noticed that. I think the key thing is that there are so many generations, unfortunately, that are away from the farm. People have stopped understanding what growing food, processing food, and selling food is all about. If this is an opportunity—and I hope that everyone will look at this as an opportunity—to respect those who are on the land, the true environmentalists, one hopes this will help in that awareness,

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Thank you.

I have just a quick story. The first employment I ever had—I lived in a small farming town in Saskatchewan—was picking rocks and baling hay. I tell people that when I'm shaving in the morning, I still think of a swather going through a field, so I have pretty deep farming roots.

The Chair: Are there any other comments or questions?

We shall go to clause-by-clause consideration.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 75(1), consideration of clause 1, the short title, and of the preamble, is postponed.

I therefore call clause 2.

(Clause 2 is carried.)

(Clause 3 is carried.)

The Chair: Shall the short title carry?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the preamble carry?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the Chair report the bill to the House?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

● (1615)

Mr. Luc Berthold: I ask for a recorded vote.

No, no, I am kidding.

Some Hon. Members: Ah, ah!

The Chair: Done. Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Thank you so much, Mr. Stetski.

You will be on every farmer's hat from now until October.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Thank you.

Might I ask the clerk if it's appropriate for me to hand these out? These are jar openers. They work really well, so I'd like to give one to each of you. I didn't want to bribe you ahead of time, but I want to thank you now, including the clerks and any analysts who would like one. That would be great.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

We are going to suspend the meeting for a few minutes to give our next witnesses time to get settled.

● (1615)

(Pause)

● (1615)

The Chair: We now resume the meeting. Please take your seats.

[*English*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee proceeds to a briefing on genetically modified wheat in Alberta.

With us today, from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food, is Mr. Fred Gorrell, assistant deputy minister, international affairs branch. Also with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, we have Mr. David Bailey, director of the plant production division. Here from the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food is Kathleen Donohue, director general of the market access secretariat. Welcome to our committee.

If I understand correctly, there will be just one opening statement, from Mr. Gorrell.

● (1620)

Mr. Fred Gorrell (Assistant Deputy Minister, International Affairs Branch, Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Canadian Food Inspection Agency): That is correct.

The Chair: You have seven minutes.

Mr. Fred Gorrell: I'll use my time effectively. Thank you.

Good afternoon, everyone.

On June 14 the Canadian Food Inspection Agency issued a public statement regarding the discovery of a few genetically modified, herbicide-tolerant wheat plants found growing along an access road in southern Alberta. When the CFIA was notified of the finding, CFIA scientists conducted tests to determine why the wheat survived. The CFIA tests confirmed that the wheat found was genetically modified to be herbicide tolerant.

Since GM wheat is not authorized in Canada, the CFIA worked collaboratively with partners at all levels to gather as much complete, accurate, credible information about this discovery as possible. Based on extensive scientific testing, there is no evidence that the GM wheat is present anywhere other than the isolated spot where it was discovered. In addition, Health Canada has concluded that the finding does not pose a food safety risk.

While genetically modified wheat is not approved for commercial use in Canada, the same genetically modified trait has been approved in canola, corn, and soybeans for over 20 years in Canada. In these crops, previous Health Canada and CFIA safety assessments have demonstrated that this trait does not pose a risk to public health, the health of animals, or the environment.

The CFIA will continue to work with the landowner to monitor the area over the next three years to help prevent any GM from persisting in the environment. As a trusted science-based regulator, the CFIA is committed to being transparent and accountable. Details and information on the findings of the CFIA's work related to it, including a full report, are available on the CFIA website.

[*Translation*]

So, in summary, there is no evidence that this genetically modified wheat is present anywhere other than the isolated site where it was discovered. The unauthorized wheat is not a match for any currently registered seed variety authorized for commercial sale or production in Canada. This means that no seed sold in Canada should contain this trait. Buyers of certified seed can have confidence in their purchase. In addition, this wheat has never been seen in the Canadian Grain Commission's records of past grain shipments.

[*English*]

Canada's crop and food safety system is supported by world-leading practices in farm management and by sound regulations that are based on science. In 2017 Canadian wheat production was 30 million tonnes across an area of approximately 22 million acres, making it one of the largest field crops in Canada.

In response to this finding, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Global Affairs Canada, and the Canadian Grain Commission, as well as all provincial partners, have worked together to maintain market access conditions and to ensure a predictable, stable trading environment. The excellent quality and consistency of Canadian wheat has allowed us to build the confidence and trust of Canadians and buyers around the world. One of the government's top priorities is to maintain that trust and keep markets open.

In 2017 Canadian exports of wheat were valued at approximately $6.6 billion. Canada exports to more than 60 global markets. The top five markets for Canadian wheat are the United States, Japan, Indonesia, Algeria, and Bangladesh.

[*Translation*]

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada representatives are in regular contact with Canadian wheat and grain associations and other Canadian agricultural associations to inform them of the impact of this finding on international markets.

[*English*]

We assured our grain industry that we would share all information available to allow them and Canadian wheat growers to make informed science-based decisions. The federal government will continue to work closely with provinces and territories, as well as with the industry, to monitor and assess the needs of the wheat producers.

Since the announcement, AAFC and CFIA officials have been fully engaged with trading partners on the issue. Canadian government officials at our missions and in Ottawa are in daily contact with Japanese and South Korean counterparts. We are informing them that Canadian wheat is GMO-free and that a test to detect this GM wheat is available should they need more reassurance that the unauthorized product is not in commercial supplies or in Canadian wheat shipments.

Posts in our missions abroad have been in contact with their counterparts, and senior Agriculture and Agri-Food officials have called the United States, the European Union, and Mexico. We also continue to engage with other markets. The Minister of International Trade and the Minister of Agriculture have also reached out to their counterparts.

At this time, Japan and South Korea have temporarily suspended the sale and distribution of Canadian wheat in their respective markets. This is not a surprise, as these two markets closed temporarily when the U.S. had similar discoveries. We have shared our test kit to identify the GM wheat with these countries and are prepared to do so with other markets. Also, CFIA officials are in close contact with them to answer any technical questions they may have.

This week, Canada is also hosting a delegation of Japanese government officials who are reviewing the analytical work done in the last few months. The delegation is meeting with officials of the CFIA and the Canadian Grain Commission, and with Agriculture and Agri-Food officials, as well as industry stakeholder representatives.

● (1625)

Agriculture Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency continue to monitor international market reactions and are ready to engage with foreign countries to provide all of the information and science-based evidence to maintain market access.

[*Translation*]

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gorrell.

Now we will go to a question round.

Mr. Barlow, you have six minutes.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you very much, Mr. Gorrell and team, for being here to walk us through this.

We certainly have some questions in terms of the background on how we got to this, but also on what our steps are moving forward. Certainly, I think some of the frustration we've heard is that those of us on this committee didn't know anything about this before that press conference.

If something like this were to happen again—hopefully it does not—I think it would behoove the CFIA and the government to at least inform the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food about this situation so that we could be prepared to address it. I was inundated with calls from my grain growers across Alberta, and I didn't have a whole lot of answers because I didn't know anything more than they did at the time. I think one step that was missing was informing members of this committee about this, and I think that in the future we should be prepared and have some tools in our tool belt to address something like this.

I'll ask my first question. What was the contact between Japan and Canada before the news conference was held? Were there discussions between those two countries before the CFIA news conference was held?

Mr. Fred Gorrell: Thank you for the question. Your point on information is noted. We have heard similar comments from others, and we'll take note of that going forward. I appreciate that.

Relative to the Japanese government, as well as other governments, they were advised as the announcement was going forward. Senior level officials—I and others—were contacting them, letting them be aware of it, and providing information. There was no early or advance warning for any of the markets, but as soon as it became public we were active with all of our trading partners through our vast network with Global Affairs Canada, as well as making phone calls directly to them. We gave them the information Qs and As and waited for their comments.

Mr. John Barlow: The other comment we've heard from our industry stakeholders is that they also didn't know anything about this until after the press conference. I do know that some of them knew literally minutes before that.

What is the protocol for working with industry when something like this happens? My reason for asking that question is that we have the western Grain Growers and we have Cereals Canada. A lot of these groups could have had a strong public relations campaign ready as well, not only for our international customers but certainly also for Canadians who are worried about a food safety issue. What is the protocol for working with our industry stakeholders on an issue like this? Also, why were they not included well beforehand?

Mr. Fred Gorrell: I'm going to give you a part of the answer and then ask my colleague David Bailey to also help.

This is new for us. This is a sensitive issue, as people appreciate, and information such as this can affect markets. I think we're all aware of that.

As you indicated, key industry stakeholders, leaders in the industry, were advised an hour or an hour or so in advance. We felt that was—and that has been—to keep the information that way to allow...so there was not any market disruption. You'll notice that when the announcement went out, it was after the markets were closed in North America.

We're always prepared to look at these things going forward, but we had worked and we had all the information available—Qs and As and other information—for the industry. That is the protocol, especially in this event, which is new for us.

David, is there anything else that you might want to add?

Mr. David Bailey (Director, Plant Production Division, Canadian Food Inspection Agency): Thank you, Fred.

Thank you for the question. As Fred has pointed out, this is new. It is new for the regulator as well. We have not had this experience previously. For all the reasons that Mr. Gorrell has outlined around market issues, there was a concern that if we did not have complete and accurate information in advance of having conversations with industry and others, it could impact the market.

It is a significant anomaly for us. At some point, we felt that from an openness and transparency perspective we did need to speak about it, but we had to be cautious in how we did that in order to protect our market.

● (1630)

Mr. John Barlow: Thank you. I would just hope that if we learn anything from this it's that, moving forward, we have a template on how to address these issues. I've survived BSE so I'm very sensitive to these types of issues when they come up, and I think communication and information are imperative.

Next, what is the plan for CFIA and the government moving forward? Is there an outreach plan? It sounds like something has already been done with other countries, for Indonesia and some of these other countries that have just had their special holiday. Are there other countries in discussion and that are contemplating blocking Canadian wheat imports? What is the next step for CFIA and the government?

Mr. Fred Gorrell: Thank you for the question. It's a good question as well.

First of all, in terms of my opening comments, we anticipated, out of all of the markets in the world.... We learned from the U.S. experience. In fact, there were some good lessons learned. Japan and South Korea reacted that way with the United States.

As I've indicated, we've reached out through Global Affairs to almost all of our embassies that we would be exporting wheat to. They have all of the information and were contacted. You made reference to Indonesia and other Muslim countries, where they're just finishing their holiday of Ramadan and have taken a week. Our embassies have been in and talking to them, and there has been no indication.... But for our key trading markets, we have talked to them. We've also made requests for calls at senior or even ministerial levels. At this time, for example, the Japanese do not feel they need to have a senior call. Instead, they put a team on the ground. They wanted to know the technical information.

Going forward, we are monitoring every day—and even at night because of the time differences—any reactions or any questions from any of the embassies or our trading partners. We're on it right away. All of our embassies, and that's with Global Affairs, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and Agriculture Canada, are very proactive in responding to any questions and sending out test kits if they're required.

We are feeling right now that we are responding to all of the requests, and we're obviously monitoring any media in other countries as well.

Mr. John Barlow: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barlow.

Mr. Longfield, you have six minutes.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you for coming to present the information to us.

I'm going to approach this slightly differently from my colleague across the way to say that it's good to get a complete package with the briefing and the timelines involved, and that if you were to come in early and say you found something and you're not sure what the extent of it is, then you leave room in the market for people to speculate about how things happened, where things happened, and the extent of the damage.

I was interested in one of the pieces.... There were two things that came out for me: the science that was involved, and that it was done quite early and was able to get right down to the product code from Monsanto, the MON71200.

The University of Guelph does bar code research on the Barcode of Life. They have a catalogue of all life forms and are using partial segments of DNA to trace whatever life form we're trying to trace. Was that the type of technology that was used? It was a very.... In terms of lab time, the end of January for the discovery and then April 8 for this detailed scientific reporting isn't a lot of time for labs to do the detailed analysis. How were we that quick on doing that? Was the U of G involved, or can you say that?

Mr. Fred Gorrell: I'm going to ask my colleague David Bailey to respond to that.

Mr. David Bailey: Thank you.

We have quite a remarkable group of scientists in our lab, and they were able to do partially what you're referring to at the University of Guelph. We're familiar with that Barcode of Life program. They did DNA extraction to attempt to understand what it was that we had found, keeping in mind that we had found so little of something and we needed to understand what it was and to try to arrive at what the event-specific element was in relation to the genetic modification. Arriving at the trait that was found, the MON71200, took some time, but because MON71200 had been used in field trials in the past in both Canada and the United States, we were able to make reference to our database of field trials.

That allowed the scientists to use their methods but also to make comparisons to things that we did know versus what we didn't know.

● (1635)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: That's the second piece for me. Your report stated that there were no field trials within 300 kilometres of where those samples were found. That makes you jump to other conclusions about whether they were intentionally planted beside a side road for people to discover later. Were they carried on animals, trucks, or vehicles? I think that part of it has been ruled out in terms of transport of the seeds.

Do you have a map of where GM trials on wheat ...ve occurred in Canada when they've occurred? I'm assuming that you are able to keep track of any field trial work that's ever been done on any GM wheat product in Canada.

Mr. David Bailey: Yes, in fact we do. We have a database that contains all applications on field trials. We know the locations of all the field trials that we as the regulator have approved.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: There will still be the question of how this sample occurred in a ditch on a side road beside a field that had never had that seed in it, and we may never know the answer to that. What you're now doing is confirming that what is in the field doesn't have GM traces. You've used large sample sizes over many years to confirm that there's no trace of any GM product still in the fields.

Mr. David Bailey: That's correct. We have, over the period of time of our analysis, done significant analysis. We have sampled everything that came off those fields on that farm in 2017—so the 2017 crop. Everything was negative. We're talking about nine fields or approximately 1,500 acres. We have also done detailed surveying in the immediate area, on the field that's adjacent to where the find was, and we have found all negative results from what we've tested with the exception of the ability to confirm the location of and reconfirm the find that was originally found.

We can say with confidence that it is not on that farm. It's not in the discovery site, and it has not entered the grain system, the seed system. We can be absolutely certain about that. So we've isolated it, controlled it, and destroyed it.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: There's one other thing. I am originally from the Prairies. I grew up in Winnipeg and I travelled the Prairies extensively. I know that the last week in January isn't the warmest week to be travelling on the Prairies. This was found in January. The tests were done in February and March. We had a really brutal winter on the Prairies. How would this be occurring in the middle of a brutal winter? It would have been there prior to the winter, I'm guessing, and it was somehow discovered. Could you walk us just briefly through that, in about 20 seconds or less?

Mr. David Bailey: Yes. Just to bring some clarity to the find, it is from the 2017 season. In the summer of 2017, a contract sprayer who was doing work on this access road, which is an access road to a Husky oil platform, after spraying discovered some plants that had survived. This is not necessarily unusual in an agricultural context. It could be due to weather. It could due to be a spray-application error. They provided those to the Alberta government, which did further tests. They were not looking for a genetic modification, but in the process of that scientific analysis, they discovered that there was one. As you can imagine, that took many months.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bailey. I'm going to have to cut it there. Perhaps you can continue, but I'm not going to put that in.

Mr. MacGregor, you are up for six minutes.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I can see from your report here and I understand why you wanted to complete extensive testing. I mean you went through 60,000 square metres, 284 wheat heads, nine fields, and 1,500 acres. You want to do your due diligence and I can appreciate the sensitivity of this in relation to our market partners. That said, I'm just sort of following up what Mr. Longfield said. Page 5 says that you don't have any evidence "that would explain how or if the current GM wheat finding is linked to the previous trial." Is there a leading theory that is guiding you?

As a follow-up to that, with the existing trials what kinds of precautions are mandated by CFIA to prevent this kind of thing from happening in the first place, and will you take this example to inform how you regulate in the future?

● (1640)

Mr. David Bailey: First, I think a point of clarification is that there is no sense of speculating in terms of the potential avenues that this may have come from. We have pursued every reasonable evidence-based avenue to understand where it's not, and we're able to speak with confidence that it's not in our system. It's not in the grain handling system or in the export system. From that perspective we are very focused on ensuring that it does not persist in the environment, so we have put in place a three-year monitoring program that will oversee the fields. This year the fields will remain fallow and have had chemical treatments to prevent any further growth. We will not allow any cereal crops to be grown for the next three seasons. By this method we will ensure that the find, or any of its progeny, does not persist in the environment on a go-forward basis.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you.

In the conclusion of your incident report, in the very last sentence, you mentioned, "The CFIA is confident in the results of the extensive testing, but a validated test could be shared with trading partners should they request it." Given the sensitivity and with how quickly Japan and South Korea acted, why did the CFIA not choose to be proactive with the report? You're saying "should they request it". Why not just offer it straight up?

Mr. Fred Gorrell: That's a good question. Just so you know, all the testing kits have been provided to those countries that you mentioned. They've already been done, so between the announcement on Friday and our communication and talking to them through our posts, the kits have been provided and they're using them in their labs. That's why the Japanese are here as well.

It's very expedited and ready. At the same time, with the duplication of all the test kits, we're making sure who we send them to. There was no delay in the sense of.... By this week they will all have the kits. The idea is that we're very confident in our findings, but of course people want to do their own due diligence. As soon as they asked for the testing kit and the methodology, it was sent to them immediately.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you.

With South Korea and Japan having temporarily suspended the import of Canadian wheat, are you able to paint a picture for this committee on what that means in terms of daily losses? How long do you expect this to last? What does it look like physically with grain shipments that are already in transit?

We've already just suffered through a pretty brutal winter with our railway companies. I come from a part of Canada where every single anchorage was being used by ships waiting at harbour. Is grain still being loaded onto ships? Are ships still heading to Japan, or are they just being stopped at the port for now? Is that what this looks like?

Mr. Fred Gorrell: It's a good question. I won't prejudice the concluding comments by the Japanese or the South Koreans, but we do have lessons learned from what we saw with the United States. You're looking at four weeks, six weeks—a month. I think the evidence that we have is very well suited if not better than what the United States had, but that would give us a testing idea.

The Japanese, to put it this way, instead of taking phone calls were on planes on the weekend. They arrived Monday, so they were in Ottawa yesterday with their labs. They're meeting with the CGC in Winnipeg and they're going to be in our Port of Vancouver on Friday. They want to do due diligence and get this done quickly, efficiently, effectively, for all of the questions. If we look at history, they need a number of weeks to do their due diligence, do the testing, and confirm.

In South Korea what they've done is that they are stopping the sale and distribution of Canadian wheat in Korea. They're going to be testing it as well. The idea would be that the two markets that we anticipated, given past contacts, have temporarily suspended. They're here. They're doing the testing. I would say they would be pleased that we are reacting so positively and quickly to them. If we follow forward, I would like to say weeks to a month. I don't want to go beyond, but we're using the U.S. as an example—two weeks to six weeks, somewhere out there.

At the same time, no other markets have reacted, but the products are not going to Japan right now because the Japanese will need to test everything. We will in due course...and we're talking on a daily basis with the grain industry, the traders as well, to understand what the implications are vis-à-vis exports, transportation, etc. These are things that we're dealing with on the agriculture side on a day-to-day basis, and it would be something we would be able to share with you on a go-forward basis.

● (1645)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: I would appreciate that. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gorrell and Mr. MacGregor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Drouin, you have six minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thanks for coming here on such short notice. We certainly appreciate it.

I'd like to go back to the findings and to the U.S. example. How do we understand the fact that these things happen? Will this be a normal occurrence in the future as we continue to...? Can we place the blame solely on testing or at this point is that not really what we're looking at?

Mr. David Bailey: First, I think we wouldn't want to speculate on what the future might look like. This is definitely an anomaly.

We've had a long history of scientific field trials, both in Canada and in the United States. We have a rigorous regime in place, a regulatory regime, around field trials. As field trials go forward and complete, we ensure, through inspection activities and instructions to those who hold those field trials, to destroy everything that is related to that.

For this particular find, even though the event-specific, the MON71200, was what we found and it was tested in Canada and the United States, it is not linked to the unknown wheat that we found. We know what the unknown wheat is by its fingerprint, but we don't have a name for it and, therefore, on the relationship between that and previous field trials, there isn't any link between those two at this point that we can point to.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Okay. I guess my next question would be about how to provide assurance to some of our trading partners that these are anomalies. We've seen it in the United States and, now, here in Canada. How do we tell them that Canada is a safe place and that, yes, our wheat does not contain GM crops that were not approved in Canada?

Mr. David Bailey: I think there are two parts to that answer. One is our ability to identify what we've found, and our ability to ensure that it doesn't persist in the environment. Third—and I think this goes to the professionalism of those who work in agriculture—our system works. It was identified as a small amount on the side of a road. It never entered agriculture. That goes to how the system works in total. That I think protects our system and is a narrative at a science-based level that allows us to talk to trading partners about why our system is safe and is free from this event.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I don't know the answer, but the U.S. continues to export to Japan right now, so we know that Japan has confidence in the U.S. system. There is no reason that Japan would not have confidence in our system, right?

Mr. Fred Gorrell: Very much so, and again, I'm going to repeat myself, not because I like to hear myself say the same thing—

Mr. Francis Drouin: I didn't think so.

Mr. Fred Gorrell: No, but from the Japanese and the Koreans we anticipated this because of the way they look at it. At the same time, they're continuing to take the U.S. product. Obviously people have due diligence: they have the right to test it. With everything we've done—the report, our testing, and their being here—we are feeling very confident that we'll resume normal trade in due course.

Mr. Francis Drouin: My colleague Mr. Barlow was talking about Indonesia, and we're doing everything we can as a government to ensure that we're dealing not only with the current markets that have now temporarily suspended imports, but also with other partners that might potentially temporarily suspend our imports. We're educating them on how we came about this situation.

Mr. Fred Gorrell: It's an interesting.... One of the things I want to say is that it's an isolated event, but it's a very serious event, for all of the reasons we're talking about. David just outlined how much work we've done and the system has taken. We're being proactive but at the same time not trying to be alarmist. It's that balance.

We're reaching out to all of our major grain importers. We want to make sure.... We're also working with our traders, because they're also a very good conduit. I understand the question that we received at the start regarding working with our associations and our traders. They're making sure.... If the importers are talking to their governments and they need information, we're there.

There are a lot of people working a lot of long hours to make sure this goes forward smoothly and that if things do escalate even further we're prepared and able. The Government of Canada and also all of the bureaucracy and our associations are very well situated to understand the seriousness of it.

I hope that answers your question.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Yes. I really want to commend you guys for the work you've done. It could have been a lot worse had the wheat found itself in the food supply, which it didn't, so obviously we have a system in Canada that works and we're transparent about it. We've communicated that. Thank you very much for highlighting that and for the report. Good luck in the future. I hope we can come to a positive solution.

[*Translation*]

Thank you.

● (1650)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Drouin.

Mrs. Nassif, the floor is yours.

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Gorrell, thank you for your presentation.

You have just said that the CFIA was informed of the presence of this wheat of unknown origin. Can you comment on the three cases in the United States? Can you tell us about the similarities or differences in terms of the conclusion?

Mr. Fred Gorrell: Thank you for the question.

[*English*]

There were some similarities with the U.S., and one of the answers I want to give everybody is that in the 2013 Oregon case, the U.S. was never able to determine the origin. There's one example where it was. They were able to confirm that the product had not entered into the food system and that it did not represent food safety risks, but they were never able to understand or determine the origin. So there are many similarities there. This is not related to the U.S. wheat. We're quite confident there's no connection between this and the Oregon wheat or with another issue that was in, I believe, Montana. That is good. I want to reiterate as well that the GM wheat is not approved, registered, or grown in North America or anywhere in the world. That's another similarity: it's not registered and it's not reproduced, but the trait that is used, the herbicide-tolerant trait, is approved for use in soybeans, corn, and canola in Canada as well as in the United States.

The similarities with the United States are that they did an investigation; they found that it wasn't in the food supply; it wasn't a food safety risk. In one case they weren't able to determine the origin; in the other ones they were able to from the research. At the same time, the input, the trade, temporarily stopped. The testing was done; we confirmed with our trading partners that everything was okay, and trade recommenced.

[*Translation*]

I hope that answers your question.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: It is not too clear to me. I want to know about the differences.

You talked about the similarities. Is this wheat of unknown origin the same genetically modified wheat that was found in the state of Oregon in 2013?

Mr. Fred Gorrell: No.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: It is not the same wheat.

What is the difference between what was found here and what was found in Oregon in 2013?

[*English*]

Mr. David Bailey: No, what we found and what the U.S. found are not the same kinds of wheat. They are different varieties of wheat.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: So there is no connection.

Mr. Fred Gorrell: No.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: What is our government doing to make sure that this does not happen again?

[*English*]

Mr. David Bailey: As I said earlier, we have one of the most stringent regulatory regimes in the world around field trials and in terms of innovation related to biotechnology. One thing we will do as we move out of this period of looking and working through the trade issues is to take some lessons learned, and we'll see where we can strengthen and harden our system even further to ensure that we are taking all steps to minimize the occurrence of what we might call a "rogue" or "mongrel" wheat find such as this, which is related to a genetic modification that is not approved for use in commercial production in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Could the Canadian Grain Commission have played a role? If so, what role could it have played?

[*English*]

Mr. David Bailey: Yes. The Grain Commission has played a significant role with us from the very beginning. They have helped us in some of the scientific analysis. They have also been responsible for some of the significant testing that was done in the grain system to ensure that it was not in the system, that it isn't currently in the system. They can also continue to ensure that it is not in any exports going to our trading partners.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: You said that, if countries ask you for test results, you provide them.

How are we going to make sure that our trading partners are going to come back to us? How can we provide Japan and South Korea, for example, with an assurance so that they will come back to our market as quickly as possible?

● (1655)

[*English*]

Mr. Fred Gorrell: Exactly. There are many countries, as we mentioned, and the evidence—and again I can't preclude what the Japanese or the South Koreans were doing, but they have been very appreciative and positive about how we've responded and about the information we've given them. As Mr. Drouin said, in the report we've been open and transparent and we've shared the information. That is the way we've done it in Canada. Right now there is no indication—and again I can't speculate—that Japan or South Korea will not reopen their borders in due course.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Do we know about how long that will take?

Mr. Fred Gorrell: That is a good question. In the United States, it was more or less a month.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Thank you.

Mr. Fred Gorrell: You are welcome.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Nassif.

[*English*]

Mr. Dreeshen, you have six minutes.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Gorrell, for being here today. I just have a couple of things. First of all, I went through the report. I think it's excellent. It goes through all of the different details.

The questions we've had so far today—I had written down a lot of them—have more or less been answered. A couple of days ago I had a chance to be at the U.S. embassy, where they were talking about food safety testing and that type of thing. I think some of the folks from your department would have been there as well. The technology we have to be able to determine this, with DNA tests and so on, is amazing. I think people should recognize that what you've done and what you've been able to determine certainly should give everybody some comfort in that regard.

I'd like to turn to some information provided by the library. Between 2013 and 2016, there were three incidents of unauthorized GM wheat releases. These were in Oregon in 2013, in Montana in 2014, and in Washington in 2016. Here we have it kind of spaced along these three years in different places. How and where were those found? Do you have information about that?

Mr. David Bailey: Each of those events were slightly different. We can provide this committee with a bit more detail on those and post it.

One was related to a field trial. It was an experience in which there were things you could quickly identify in relation to what was being tested. They were able to manage that relatively quickly. Another was a find of a fair amount of plants in a fallow field. They were able to understand what it was right away. They were able to deal with it more quickly. Then they had one that was very much like it was for us—an isolated event, but they were unable to identify where it had come from. It had not been near any field trials, so they were able to manage it similar to the way that we are managing this particular issue.

Each of them was unique in its own way, but I think the relationship to field trials in the other two is an important distinction between what we are experiencing and those particular trials.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: But field trials that take place in the U.S. or take place in Canada are dealt with under certain security protocols. I'm wondering if you could perhaps go through what you might know about that and certainly what you know about the ones from the 1990s.

Mr. David Bailey: I can speak a little bit to our regime around field trials. Field trials are heavily regulated. I think one of the important points for this committee is that there are buffers put around those field trials. There are 30-metre buffers put around anything that's field-trialed. That is based on science and potential pollen flow so that you don't have contamination into other areas.

Once those field trials are completed, everything is destroyed in relation to the field trial. The field is monitored for two years thereafter to ensure that nothing persists. There is a process in place for ensuring that nothing, for lack of a better term, gets out of the field trial or escapes from that space. It is a very disciplined approach, with follow-up from the regulator and management by the proponent for the research being done.

● (1700)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Is that similar to what is done, or had been done, on any Canadian trials as well?

Mr. David Bailey: That's correct. I've described the Canadian regulatory regime. Our American counterparts have a very similar process.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: When the plants were found, had they gone through to maturity? Obviously, you don't spray them when they're headed out. You spray and then take a look later. At what stage were people alerted to it, and were those seeds viable?

Mr. David Bailey: They hadn't reached maturity when they were found and when they were picked up off the side of the road.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Okay.

The last part goes back to one of the questions from Mr. Barlow with regard to the industry wondering about the amount of time they had to respond to this. As we saw, it started back in the fall of the year before. The Alberta government had an opportunity to be engaged in it. I believe that April was another time frame in which a discussion of these things was taking place with the farmers.

I understand how a person might want to deal with the individual farmer to make sure that the job is done right away and you're solving it, but again, I still think people in the industry are wondering if there are lessons to be learned here about being able to let them know, because they have expertise as well.

Mr. Fred Gorrell: Thank you.

In every instance like this, there are always lessons learned. We take that. We understand it. We're always wanting to do better in things, so we capture all of these points from both your committee and the industry. We capture them and review them. Right now we're much more focused on dealing with the issue, but I can promise you that those types of things will not be lost and we'll be looking at them so we don't have to come back and have the same questions from you again.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Dreeshen.

Now we go to Mr. Peschisolido.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido: Mr. Chair, thank you.

Thank you to the witnesses appearing before us.

What do we do now? We've heard a pretty good technical analysis of testing and what would happen. I think our credibility is at stake with some significant trading partners. What are the next steps on the regulatory side at CFIA? Also I'm interested in hearing from the department on how we proceed, maybe not on the regulatory side but on public policy and how we create a narrative.

Mr. Fred Gorrell: You can start.

Mr. David Bailey: In terms of what we're doing now and going forward, as I mentioned, we will focus very much on the monitoring and mitigation plan to ensure there is no persistence in the environment, and that what we have isolated and controlled remains that way and that it does not move into the system.

We will also continue with our partners at the Canadian Grain Commission to do sampling around everything that's going through the system, and by ensuring that no cereal crops will be planted on those fields, we will also ensure there is no persistence.

As Mr. Gorrell mentioned earlier, we always take lessons learned, so as we get out of this period of time, we will sit back and look to see if we need to refine any of our programs or policy approaches, and we'll learn those lessons as we often do for that continuous improvement so that we can maintain a world-class, rigorous regime when it comes to agricultural innovation.

Mr. Fred Gorrell: I would also add what I think is important for Canada. We have been open and transparent. That's been one of the mottos of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency as well as just overall how we handle.... We're continuing that and having a dialogue, as we've indicated, with the industry and with Canadians.

Relative to the trading partners, I think our being forthright, making sure they have the information, and opening our books, so to speak, so that they see everything allows them to trust. There always are consequences in the sense that they have to look at everything, but at the end of the day, they know our science, and they know what we're doing. I think going forward we will learn whether we need to have different dialogues, different conversations, but at the end, we want to assure all of our trading partners and Canadians that our products continue to be GMO-free for wheat. The idea would be that they can have assurance of the high quality of wheat around the world, as they have. That is one of our trademarks. As well, it is a large economic driver for farmers and producers as well.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido: Ms. Donohue, if I may, we've heard about the regulatory set from CFIA. I assume you're from Agriculture Canada. Is there some thinking on how we move forward? Will this impact our negotiations on a variety of fronts? The agriculture minister has been wonderful in having a lot of bilateral meetings with quite a few countries in a variety of places in the world. I'd be interested in hearing your thoughts and the department's thoughts on how we can respond to this.

● (1705)

Ms. Kathleen Donohue (Director General, Market Access Secretariat, Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food): You mentioned a trade negotiations perspective. We don't see any link between this isolated incident and our negotiations. They're really very much two separate issues.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido: I'm assuming what you are implying is that this is a one-off and it won't have an impact. How do we get that across to our trading partners?

Ms. Kathleen Donohue: As my colleague Mr. Gorrell has mentioned, we're already in discussions with some of our key trading partners. Japan is currently visiting Canada, and it's quite clear that they are motivated to resume trade as soon as possible. They simply need to go through their appropriate levels of due diligence to reassure themselves of the scientific evidence that has been extensive on the part of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and they may need to reassure themselves by conducting their own testing of shipments. I think that is to be expected.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido: Mr. Chair, that's all I have.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Peschisolido.

Mr. Barlow, you have five minutes.

Mr. John Barlow: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will likely not take all five minutes.

Again, thanks to the group for being very transparent and forthright. The report is excellent. It really walks us through everything that occurred.

I have just a couple of really quick questions. There were a lot of questions out there about why this took a year. I'm assuming, looking at the timeline you put together, that this was discovered very late in 2017 in Alberta. By the time Alberta Agriculture had approached CFIA, we were into the 2018 calendar year. This didn't sit around for a year.

Mr. Fred Gorrell: Right. It wasn't brought to our attention until January 31 of this year. The process, which has been outlined, went very quickly from the testing there.

Now, when you look at it, some people might ask why it's taken a year, but that's not putting it in the right context—how it was found in July, how it wasn't really considered to be a problem, how it was just a sprayer who was looking at it, and how, when it was brought to our attention, we immediately grew it and tested it. When it was found to be GMO, that's when things moved rather quickly between April and going forward.

So no, I think that's a good point and a good question. It's something that we're making sure people understand.

Mr. John Barlow: Thank you. By all means, I want you to do your due diligence in the research, the identification, the traceability, and all that first before we make that public. I appreciate having that timeline there.

I'm not sure if you can answer this question, but we've talked about, and my colleagues have asked questions about, the future or the implications with regard to other trading partners. There's CETA, and then I look at the CPTPP. If that is signed, dispute resolution is part of that agreement. Could Japan do something like this, once CPTPP is signed, without a science-based decision behind it? Would they have to go through the dispute resolution process first and prove it's a science-based decision before blocking imports of something like this?

I'm just curious if that is the case. To my understanding, that is the case, but you may know that better than I do.

Mr. Fred Gorrell: I have to say that I didn't prepare for that question. That was a good one.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. John Barlow: It just popped into my head.

Mr. Fred Gorrell: I'll start by saying that the Japanese are very science-based. That's why they're very rigorous in how they look at it. We have a high level of comfort with the Japanese and how they look at things.

Right now, in all of the cases we've had—I lived through the BSE "era", if we may call it that, as well—the Japanese have been very systematic in how they ask their questions. We've never had problems with their being capricious or non science-based.

Relative to TPP, there is a dispute resolution mechanism in it, and I think ratified, that could be, if they took a non scientific-based approach, like a non-tariff barrier. Quite frankly, though, the way the Japanese work, and have worked to date, I don't think that would be a specific concern in this instance.

Mr. John Barlow: Thanks.

The last comment or question I have is this. One thing I'm surprised by is the number of comments and emails I have from Canadians themselves who are unaware that we do not have GM wheat in Canada. We don't produce it. We don't sell it or export it. I'm wondering if it would be worthwhile for CFIA, maybe in partnership with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, to do an awareness campaign about what we actually produce, what is GM, and what is exported. I'm really surprised that it's still an issue out there.

I would just make the comment that it might be a way for us to show some support of our industry now in terms of how this has gone through. We stand behind a very strong regulatory regime. We stand behind our producers. I think this is a good opportunity to make that awareness campaign.

● (1710)

Mr. Fred Gorrell: Communicating with Canadians and others is always something we are doing. Clarity about what we grow and produce in Canada, and how we do it, is something we are always striving to do at the agriculture department and CFIA.

Mr. John Barlow: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barlow and Mr. Gorrell.

Mr. MacGregor, you have up to three minutes, if you wish.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you.

This is not really a question but more of a comment. When we as a committee were doing our trip across the country studying technology and innovation, we were looking at gene editing, which is really coming to the forefront. Some comparisons were made between the rollout of GMO versus gene editing.

Just piggybacking on Mr. Barlow's comment, with gene editing you're not really inserting foreign DNA. You're trying to stress certain beneficial traits of the same sequence. In terms of public relations and how we inform the public, I'm sure you're very well aware of the lessons that can be learned—

Mr. Fred Gorrell: Yes.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: —on the role of that technology.

Mr. Fred Gorrell: Thank you for your comment.

The Chair: Thank you.

If I may, I have a question. I don't want to stretch the parliamentary session any longer than I have to, but I'm curious about something.

With regard to the plant specimens we found there, wheat is, of course, an annual plant. If the plants had been left alone, would they have had a chance to mature, germinate again next year, and eventually propagate?

Mr. David Bailey: Yes, they would be able to propagate further within themselves. That's why it's important that we controlled it and destroyed it and ensured that it didn't persist in the environment.

The Chair: In this case, it was just kind of luck, because we sprayed it. Usually we don't spray wheat with glyphosate. So other than having the odd sample in the wheat load when you ship them, how do we know this is not occurring? It was kind of a lucky strike for us to be able to identify it. Other than by taking a sample to the lab, how would we know? It might not look the same, but in thousands of acres of wheat, how do we know that this is not bigger than what we're seeing here?

Mr. David Bailey: We know that it is not bigger than what we are seeing because of the extensive scientific testing we have done. It is not a registered variety, so it is not commercially available. There is no approved genetically modified wheat in Canada for commercial use or production. Because of that, we were able to look at all of the varieties—there are about 450 varieties in Canada—and it is not a match for anything that is registered. We know this from its genetic fingerprint. Because of the extensive testing we did on the farm, we know that it has not persisted in the environment, so we can say with confidence that it has not entered the grain system and that it hasn't moved past that small footprint on that access road.

The Chair: Finally, if Japan and Korea were not getting their wheat from Canada, where would it come from? Would they look at this as an opportunity to get their wheat somewhere else? I'm just curious as to why those two are—

Mr. Fred Gorrell: It's a good question. I would like to say we have the highest-quality wheat in the world. They use it and they buy it for the reasons we have. If there were a reason they were not able to purchase that wheat for a prolonged period of time, I'm assuming traders would be looking for other countries. That is one of the reasons we're working so diligently to let them know. There is no indication, no signal yet, in the marketplace, but that is one of the reasons why we're all working so diligently to give the Japanese what they need so they can reopen the market. Your question is good: it's how traders will respond to this thing. We're still waiting to see. We're very confident and optimistic that they will return to Canada for our wheat both for the quality and, as I've said, since we've been open and transparent. They know what we're saying and they can trust it, and they can trust our relationship going forward. Our traders have forged long-term relationships with Japan, and those mean a lot to the Japanese traders themselves as well.

The Chair: Thank you so much. Thank you, Mr. Bailey, Mr. Gorrell, and Ms. Donohue, for being here again on short notice.

I want to wish everybody a good summer. Get out there, but also take some time with your family and rest and come back here refreshed. We want to see some energy.

● (1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Yes, sir. Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Also I want to thank especially our assistants and our analysts.

Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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